

# European Community

# NEWS

No. 6/88  
February 25, 1988

Contact: Giancarlo Chevallard  
(202) 862-9530

32.019.5  
+ 441.2(103)

## ATTITUDES TOWARD U.S.-EUROPEAN RELATIONS: SURVEY RESULTS RELEASED

\*More than four out of five Americans say U.S. ties to Western Europe matter a great deal--a significant increase over the percentage who endorsed that view in 1973.

\*A majority of Americans favor political unification of Western Europe.

\*Americans are more likely to cite domestic economic factors than tariffs or import restrictions as the best solutions to the U.S. trade deficit.

\*U.S. opinion leaders give Europe high marks for its cultural achievements, but say the United States provides more equal opportunity and scientific leadership. Japan produces the best products and services, they say.

Those are among the findings of a recent survey on Attitudes Toward U.S.-European Relations conducted by the Gallup Organization. Gallup interviewed a national sample of 1,300 adults and 387 opinion leaders in late 1987 about Western Europe, the European Community, international trade, national defense and other issues. The results are described below.

They are followed by a summary of the results of a survey of Europeans about their views on U.S.-European relations.

### EC OFFICE OF PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Washington: 2100 M Street NW Seventh Floor Washington DC 20037 / telephone (202) 862-9500 / telex 64215 EURCOM-UW

New York: 3 Dag Hammarskjold Plaza 305 E 47th Street New York NY 10017 / telephone (212) 371-3804 / telex 661100 EURCOM-NYK

#### U.S. RELATIONS WITH WESTERN EUROPE

The percentage of Americans who say U.S. ties with Western Europe matter a great deal (86 percent) has increased by 20 points compared with a Gallup poll conducted in 1973. The feeling is widespread that those ties have waned over the past 10 years, however, and a majority of both the general public (53 percent) and the opinion leaders (63 percent) say they should be strengthened.

Four out of five respondents have favorable feelings toward the countries in Western Europe--and one in four give a "very favorable" rating. Positive views are somewhat lower for Japan, but higher for Canada. Both survey groups say it is "very important" for government leaders to pay close attention to Western Europe (62 percent of the general public, 83 percent of the opinion leaders). However, even more express that view about the Soviet Union (82 percent of the general public and 95 percent of the opinion leaders).

Despite the positive attitudes expressed, only one-third of the general population, and fewer of the opinion elites (13 percent), think the American people are very interested in Western Europe. The perceived interest in Japan is somewhat higher, and in the Soviet Union much higher.

#### DEFENSE AND TERRORISM

Slightly more than half of the general population think Western Europe's contribution to defense of the "free world" is too small--about the same proportion giving that response in the 1973 survey. Opinion leaders are more critical--67 percent fault Europe's contribution. Three-quarters of the general public and two-thirds of the opinion leaders also complain that European allies are not supporting the United States enough in the fight against terrorism.

Both groups strongly support U.S. troops in Europe, however, as a deterrent to a Soviet attack there.

#### EUROPEAN UNIFICATION

Large majorities of both samples favor efforts to unify Western Europe--65 percent of the general public and 71 percent of the elites. One in four of

the first group and one in three of the second group are "very much" for such unification. (Those respondents who have heard of the European Community are somewhat less inclined to support unification than those who have not heard of it--55 percent versus 70 percent.)

Similarly large proportions think U.S. policy supports European unification. Most opinion leaders believe political unification would give Europeans a stronger voice in world affairs (70 percent), but they are divided almost evenly on whether it would make Europe a stronger competitor on world markets.

#### INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND DEFICITS

The general public is much more likely to know about the U.S. trade deficit with Japan (70 percent) and South Korea (52 percent) than with Western European countries (43 percent). In fact, a significant minority--32 percent--think the U.S. has a trade surplus with those countries. Responses from the opinion leaders show a similar pattern.

Thirty percent of the general public and 40 percent of the elites say Western European countries are unfair trading partners to the U.S., but more than twice as many in both groups categorize Japan that way. Canada, however, gets high marks as a fair trading partner.

The best solutions to the U.S. trade deficit, according to the respondents, are finding ways to make U.S. industry more efficient (69 percent of the general population, 79 percent of the opinion leaders) and reducing the U.S. budget deficit (64 percent and 79 percent). Import restrictions get less support from both groups, although the general public is somewhat more sympathetic--46 percent support retaliatory tariff increases (compared with 19 percent of the opinion leaders), 33 percent favor raising import taxes on Japanese goods (compared with 10 percent) and 22 percent back increased taxes on Western European goods (compared with 2 percent).

#### AGRICULTURAL TRADE

The European Community is considered the greatest threat to U.S. agriculture by only 12 percent of the opinion leaders. They are more likely to name Canada (37 percent), Argentina (28 percent), Brazil (23

percent) and Australia (21 percent). The Soviet Union (57 percent), Japan (41 percent) and China (26 percent) were cited as offering the greatest opportunities.

Most of the elite agree that U.S. farm subsidies are likely to be cut substantially because of the budget deficit (73 percent). Only 23 percent agree that the Community needs an extensive subsidy system because it has a much larger percentage of farmers. They are more likely than the general public (22 percent versus 15 percent) to support a U.S. policy of forcing Western Europe to cut back on its farm subsidies as a solution to the trade deficit.

#### COMPARING WESTERN EUROPE TO THE UNITED STATES AND JAPAN

In comparisons between Western Europe and the United States, the respondents cite European supremacy in art, music, theater and literature (46 percent of the general public and 62 percent of the opinion leaders) and in fashion design (48 percent and 61 percent).

They give the United States high marks for providing an equal opportunity to succeed (77 percent and 81 percent), encouraging individual creativity (62 percent and 78 percent) and providing world leaders in science and technology (54 percent and 66 percent). The two survey groups differ sharply on which society places a greater importance on a person's family social situation: 70 percent of the elite--but only 32 percent of the general public--say Western Europe.

Japan tops both Western Europe and the United States as producer of the best goods and services, according to both groups. However, all respondents believe the United States has the most advanced technology, with Japan coming in second and Western Europe third.

Opinion is divided on who makes the best cars. The general public ranks the United States (39 percent) and Japan (37 percent) almost equally, and Western Europe last (18 percent). However, the elites rank Japan first (50 percent), Western Europe second (26 percent) and the United States last (18 percent).

#### AWARENESS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

Less than one-third (29 percent) of those interviewed from the general public report that they have heard or read anything about the European Community, or Common Market--a decrease of 16 percentage points from the 1973 survey.

Young people are less likely to be familiar with the E.C. (22 percent for those under age 30), while college graduates (55 percent), those with a family income of \$40,000 or more (44 percent), travelers to Europe (48 percent) and several other groups showed more awareness.

Even among those who have heard of the Community, factual knowledge is low. Only 4 percent know that 12 countries are E.C. members, with 45 percent admitting they don't know the correct number. Three-fourths could name at least one of the 12 countries, with most citing France (66 percent), West Germany (58 percent) and Great Britain (53 percent).

Only about half of those familiar with the E.C. know that it is active in policy areas other than trade and economic matters.

Despite the low understanding, an overwhelming number of respondents from the general population who are aware of the European Community express positive feelings about it (90 percent, compared with 85 percent of the opinion leaders). A slight majority (51 percent) say the Community is more likely to benefit the United States than to hurt it.

Few respondents think the E.C. countries will become a "United States of Europe"--only 12 percent of the general population and 10 percent of the opinion leaders. Almost one-half of the general group who are aware of the Community believe that the E.C. reduces Western Europe's need for U.S. military assistance--compared with 30 percent of the elites.

#### PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Public opinion is divided about the U.S. role in world affairs. While 49 percent of the general public think the U.S. should play a leading role, 44 percent take a more isolationist position. Opinion leaders are much more certain, however, that the U.S. should play a leading role (83 percent). A

higher proportion of the general public in 1973 said the United States should "stop getting involved" in world affairs, which Gallup attributes to the country's involvement in the Vietnam War.

Only about one in ten respondents reports participation in an international affairs organization--a much lower proportion than is involved in local or national activities.

#### PERSONAL CONNECTIONS TO WESTERN EUROPE

More than half of Americans have traveled outside the United States (57 percent), and one-half of these travelers have visited Europe (29 percent of the total sample)--almost all to an E.C. member country. When asked to select any country in the world to visit with all expenses paid, 42 percent of the general population selected one of the E.C. countries. Twelve percent picked another West European country, 11 percent Australia and 5 percent Japan.

Two-thirds of the general population trace their ethnic roots to Western Europe, and one-fourth have parents or grandparents born there. Sixty-seven percent--and 84 percent of the elites--say they feel close to Europe because of common cultural ties and religious roots.

#### **EUROPEAN VIEWS OF THE UNITED STATES**

Europeans are somewhat less positive than their American counterparts about transatlantic relations. For example, one-half of European Community citizens have a favorable opinion of the United States, compared with the Gallup poll finding that 81 percent of the American general public have warm feelings toward Western Europe.

Positive attitudes toward the United States are highest in Ireland (73 percent), Luxembourg (68 percent), the United Kingdom (63 percent) and Italy (60 percent). Negative attitudes are highest in Greece (29 percent), the Netherlands (27 percent), the United Kingdom (26 percent) and Denmark (26 percent).

Those findings are reported by Eurobarometer, an E.C. Commission polling operation that regularly samples public opinion in the European Community. Its most recent survey included several questions designed to correspond to the Gallup poll on U.S.-European relations.

The survey shows that Europeans believe the E.C.'s ties to the United States matter a great deal--but by a smaller percentage than Americans who express that view (60 percent compared with 86 percent). One of four Europeans--compared with 10 percent of Americans--says these ties are not important. A higher proportion of Europeans than Americans think U.S.-European ties are closer than they were 10 years ago--43 percent compared with 33 percent. However, a substantial number of European respondents (more than one-fourth) did not answer this question.

About half the Community citizens think the United States government supports European unification, compared with about two-thirds of Americans.

\* \* \*

NOTE: Copies of the Gallup survey results and a Eurobarometer summary of the European findings are available from the E.C. Office of Press and Public Affairs, 2100 M Street N.W., Seventh Floor, Washington, D.C. 20037; (202) 862-9540.